

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 14, 2004

Honorable Marion Blakey
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Federal Office Building 10A
800 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Blakey,

I write to respectfully express my concern, and the concerns of many Staten Island residents, regarding an incident involving several commercial aircraft flying abnormally low over their communities this past weekend. More than 50 concerned residents called the FAA to alert local officials about what had occurred and to look for answers. This incident calls attention to that fact that plans to redesign the air space over New York City have been long delayed by the Department of Transportation, causing residents and travelers great distress. As I am sure you would agree, it is vital at this point in the resurgence of the airline industry that incidents like this are avoided, and any flaws in air routes be corrected as soon as possible.

This troubling event was not only disturbing and incredibly unpleasant for the people of Staten Island, but, on the eve of the third anniversary of the attacks of September 11th, forced these New Yorker's to relive their darkest day. I understand how difficult it is to manage the complex and crowded airspace over New York City, but I do not want an incident such as this to pass without correction.

In addition, I find it disheartening that FAA officials were either unable or unwilling to provide an explanation for the low flying flights to freighted citizens. I hope that you will include in your response the assurance that such confusion will not occur again, and that, in the future, local FAA personnel will be better able to inform the public. Though it appears that runway maintenance was the cause of the air traffic diversion, I hope that, in the future, such information is made available to my office and to the public before any before any sudden change is made to avoid a similar panic.

Last June, I wrote to you to express my disappointment with the announcement that the FAA's plan to redesign New York's airspace would be again delayed. The Environmental Impact Statement has already been delayed from when it was supposed to be finished almost a year ago. The results of this EIS and the implementation of a new airspace plan have a direct effect on the residents of Staten Island, as one of the possible

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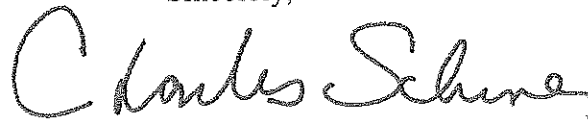
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route changes would be to allow a more direct take-off from Newark International Airport, limiting the amount of time planes fly over Staten Island. I urge you, along with Secretary Mineta, to complete the EIS as soon as possible, finish the redesign plan, and give relief to the worsening state of air congestion and low-flying planes over New York City.

I have worked tirelessly with airlines and airports all over New York State in order to revitalize the airline industry in New York. Incidents such as this bring us a step back in restoring confidence in the airline industry. I urge you to move forward with the redesign plan, and pledge my support in that effort. The residents of New York City have already witnessed first hand the devastation that errant commercial airlines can cause; they should not be forced to relive those fears erroneously.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
US Senator

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